

Healthier

SUMMER 2011

VETERANS' NEWS



NO LIMITS FOR VETERAN ATHLETES

By Sarah H. Cox, Public Affairs Specialist

Nothing stops combat Veteran Joe Beimfohr from pursuing his dreams and having a full and active life. The 33-year old former Army Staff Sergeant who lost both legs to a bomb blast in Iraq in 2005, works full-time for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, mentors young, wounded warriors and is training hard for his next handcycling event.

Beimfohr began cycling as part of his rehabilitation at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. In 2008, the Washington DC VA Medical Center's (DCVAMC) Prosthetics and Sensory Aids Service (PSAS) custom-fitted Beimfohr with his own handcycle, putting him on the road to becoming a world-class athlete.

The handcycle, a specially designed three-wheeled bicycle, is just one of the many items that PSAS provides to eligible Veterans. PSAS coordinates the purchases of durable equipment that helps restore Veterans to normal function. These items range from pacemakers, automobile adaptive equipment, eyeglasses to handcycles.

Bennie Williams, Chief of Prosthetics and Sensory Aids, says his service works extraordinarily hard to improve the quality of life for Veterans.

"Last year we closed over 50,000 consults (medical orders). A lot of the items we procured, like Joe's handcycle, allow Veterans to go outside and do things you and I take for granted."

The VA has long been an ardent supporter of the benefits of recreational therapy and exercise. Exercise improves mental health and physical wellness and the services and products provided by PSAS help make exercise possible for many Veterans.

Since Beimfohr received his handcycle, he has been unstoppable, cycling all over the United States and riding in major marathons and competitions. He is on three teams: the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) team, a national team of 20-25 riders who compete around the world; the Achilles International Track Club; and a new team, the Wounded Warrior Project which sponsors riders for events such as, the Wounded Warriors Soldiers Ride held in several locations across the county.

Several major marathons now have a handcycling category, including the Boston, Miami and the Marine Corps Marathons. In 2008, it took Beimfohr more than three hours to complete his first 26.2 mile race, the New York City Marathon. He has made great strides since then. In January, he finished the Top End/PVAA Euro-America Marathon in Melbourne, Florida, in one hour and thirty-nine minutes.

Beimfohr says riding has boosted his confidence and has given him a sense of freedom. He also enjoys the camaraderie of his fellow riders and helping younger Veterans to achieve their goals.



Joe Beimfohr posed with a few of his Iraqi friends in 2005.



During training season, Veteran Joe Beimfohr rides up to 80 miles a week.

He encourages them to take advantage of the sports and recreation programs available from the VA and from other organizations such as Paralyzed Veterans of America.

“There are tons of things out there we can do: racing, snow skiing, water skiing, tennis, horseback riding, kayaking. There is no excuse for sitting around doing nothing. Try something. You’ll like something.”

Beimfohr takes his own advice and recently finished the Soldier Ride in Annapolis. He is training now to go to France with the Ride 2 Recovery organization, where he and fellow riders will cover 400 miles in eight days, visiting historical military sites along the way.

Veterans interested in handcycling and other recreational activities should contact Voluntary and Recreation Therapy Service at 202-745-8320. For more information about Prosthetics Service call 202-745-8259.



DCVAMC Prosthetics staff provides equipment and training to help Veterans lead independent lives.



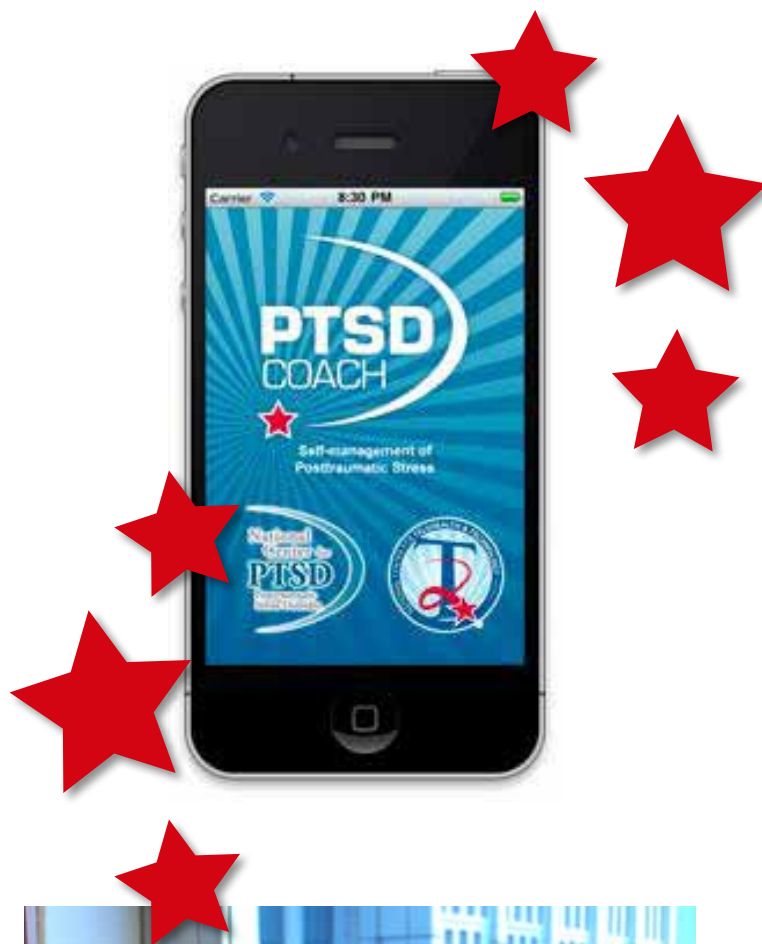
PTSD COACH NOW AVAILABLE

The new free PTSD Coach application (app) created by the VA's National Center for PTSD and the DOD's National Center for Telehealth and Technology, is proving to be very useful and popular. At press time, this new mobile app has already been downloaded to iPhones and Android devices 12,300 times since its release on April 7, 2011. The PTSD Coach provides information regarding PTSD and how to manage symptoms. It isn't meant to take the place of a mental health professional but when used with professional medical treatment, the PTSD Coach provides Veterans with dependable, trustworthy resources.

The PTSD Coach Features:

- Tools for screening and tracking your symptoms;
- Convenient, easy-to-use suggestions to help you handle stress symptoms;
- Direct links to VA support and personal contacts;
- Reliable information which is readily available.

This mobile app is currently available for the iPhone and the Droid. For more information, visit: <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/pages/PTSDCoach.asp>.



CALLING ALL WOMEN VETERANS

The VA's new Women Veterans Call Center has made a great start on its ambitious goal of calling every woman Veteran to inform them about VA services and benefits. The women Veterans are also being asked to share their VA experiences and suggest improvements.

Since women Veterans are one of the fastest growing segments of the Veteran population, the work of the Women Veterans Call Center is very necessary. Of the 22.7 million living Veterans, more than 1.8 million are women. They comprise nearly 8 percent of the total Veteran population and 6 percent of all Veterans who use VA health care services.

VA estimates by 2020 women Veterans will constitute 10 percent of the Veteran population and 9.5 percent of VA patients. The Women Veterans Health Care program has made significant changes in the last few years to enhance the health care offered to eligible women Veterans including: implementing comprehensive primary care for women, adopting key policies to improve access and enhance services and providing mental health, homelessness and other services designed to meet the unique needs of women Veterans.

The Washington DC VA Medical Center has more than 4,400 women enrolled for care in its dedicated Women's Health Clinic which provides comprehensive health care for female Veterans. For more information about women's health services, phone 202-745-8582.



FLAGSHIP OFFERS BLIND JUDO CLASSES

The ancient art of Judo is practiced by a small group of Veterans at the Washington DC VA Medical Center (DCVAMC). The Veterans are visually impaired and Judo is practiced not only as a recreational activity but also as therapy. Veteran Thomas Huff says Judo is not too different from the Taekwondo he used to study when he was an active duty Marine. He enjoys the class saying, "When you know martial arts, nobody messes with you."

Fellow classmate, 88 year-old Julius Fleischman, agrees that Judo gives him confidence. "My neighborhood is a little rough, but now when I walk down the street, I don't worry about a thing." Fleischman earned two bronze stars for bravery in WW II. He's not a man to shy away from challenges or danger. Just two years ago, Fleischman set a record for the most consecutive skydives (10) in his age bracket.

These Veterans, among others, are receiving life-altering training at DCVAMC's Vision Rehabilitation Clinic. Blinded and low-vision Veterans lose the ability to interpret the visual cues that support defense mechanisms that warn us when danger is near. This Judo class is a part of a full range of rehabilitation, supporting their efforts to lead independent lives.

Vjaya Dabir, DCVAMC Rehabilitation Specialist, believes helping Veterans find their confidence is a big part of her job. "We mainly work on four different skill sets: adaptive equipment, daily living skills, computer skills and orientation, and mobility. At the Clinic, the students learn everything from how to pour a cup a coffee to how to use a specially-adapted computer. Dabir explains that the program is personalized. "We design a customized program for each Veteran, based on his or her needs. No two programs are alike."

Their Judo instructor, Ronald Scott, says teaching the visually impaired is no different than teaching the sighted. Judo and Blind Judo both use the same throws, floor, and standing techniques. "With Judo, believe it or not, sight is not necessary," Scott said. The only difference between sighted and Blind Judo is the very start of the match. The Blind students begin by touching shoulders of their opponents, as opposed to starting several feet away. Blind participants keep track of each other by following their feet. "It's pretty amazing—watch their feet, it's a bit like an elaborate dance," Scott said.

For more information about the DCVAMC Vision Rehabilitation Clinic, please phone 202-745-8000, ext. 2430.



Julius Fleischman (standing) practices a judo hold on his instructor Ronald Scott.

DCVAMC RECOGNIZED AS A MOST WIRED HOSPITAL

The Washington DC VA Medical Center (DCVAMC) has once again been recognized as a "Most Wired" hospital. This coveted distinction is the result of the H&HN's Most Wired Survey and Benchmarking Study which promotes the effective use of information technology in achieving clinical and operational excellence. Areas surveyed included business processes, customer service, safety and quality, workforce management and public safety and quality.

DCVAMC's submission was chosen by an independent panel which evaluated organizations based upon their progress and implementation of information technology. Hospitals are rated in four areas: infrastructure, business and administrative management, clinical quality and safety.

The award was presented at the Health Forum AHA Leadership Summit in San Diego, July 17th. This is the fifth time DCVAMC has been recognized as a "Most Wired" Hospital. Previously recognitions were in 1999, 2004, 2006 and 2008.



RENOVATION AND EXPANSION PROJECTS IMPROVE

A multitude of renovation and construction projects are underway at the VA Medical Center to improve convenience and service to Veterans of our nation's capital. From the moment you enter the Medical Center you can see the changes taking place.

NEW ENTRANCE AND ATRIUM

The new revolving door at the main entrance of the Medical Center is helping to save energy and make the temperatures in the atrium more pleasant. Inside, you'll notice the atrium is bustling with patient services, such as the new Eligibility Office and a Clinic Registration (Centralized Check-in) area.

PRIVATE PATIENT ROOMS

A major \$9 million dollar project is transforming the 4C Wing into a new patient ward. Each room will offer a private restroom, a fold-down futon for guests and a computer work space.

NEW WOMEN'S PAVILION

With the increase in women Veterans seeking VA care, the Women's Clinic has outgrown its current location. The planned Women's Pavilion will triple the space of the current clinic and will offer more privacy, more exam rooms, a space for children to entertain themselves, and a Tea Bar. The new area will be a welcome addition as there are now more than 4,400 women enrolled for health care at DCVAMC.

FISHER HOUSE

The 20-suite Fisher House for families of hospitalized Veterans is scheduled to open Sept. 8. Veterans receiving treatment at the Medical Center will certainly appreciate having their families staying close-by while they receive care.



Top: DCVAMC Fisher House: The earth tones for the new private patient rooms will help create a calming atmosphere.

Center: The Women's Pavilion waiting area will boast a tea bar and a play area for children.

Bottom: The New Fisher House will soon provide a home away from home for Veterans' family members.

IMPROVE CONVENIENCE AND SERVICE TO VETERANS

PHARMACY AND PATIENT CARE AREAS

The Medical Center's Pharmacy will be conveniently accessible to Veterans from the main atrium of the hospital. Several other offices and clinics have also undergone renovations and/or relocations including: Eligibility, the Agent Cashier, Radiology, Gastroenterology, Dental, Emergency Department, and the Patient Advocate Office.

COMMUNITY BASED OUTPATIENT CLINICS (CBOC)

DCVAMC operates four CBOCs providing primary care and some specialty care in communities close to Veterans' homes. They are located in Alexandria, VA; Charlotte Hall, MD; Greenbelt, MD; and Southeast DC. The Alexandria CBOC will relocate to the new Community Hospital at Ft. Belvoir (Sunrise Pavilion) on September 19. Veterans will continue to see their same health care providers and will experience no interruption in service. A new Southern Prince George's County CBOC will open in the fall and be located near Joint Base Andrews on Allentown Road.

In Southern Maryland, the Charlotte Hall CBOC will get a mobile unit addition to expand its Lifestyle Intervention for Veterans (LIVE) program services and Telehealth services. LIVE is a program designed to help diabetic Veterans develop healthy lifestyles and better manage their disease.

BUSINESS OFFICE MOVES

To increase space for patient services at the Medical Center, the hospital has relocated some Business Office functions which do not require face-to-face communication with Veterans to office space located in Landover, MD.



Top: Family members will have a calm, comfortable private space to rest and recuperate.

Center: The new Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC), located on Ft. Belvoir, will be the largest CBOC in DCVAMC's health care system.

Bottom: The large kitchen in the Fisher House provides ample space for several family members to prepare meals simultaneously.



DIETITIAN CREATES HEALTH INCENTIVE PROGRAM



Margaux Neveu, MS, RD, delivers a Bone Bucks prize to Veteran Paul Woods as part of a new incentive program to motivate patients to adhere to their renal diet.

A little more than a year ago, Margaux Neveu, a Washington DC VA Medical Center (DCVAMC) Registered Dietitian, looked at the lab work of her patients in the Renal Care Center and knew she had to devise a system to help her patients improve their blood levels.

The renal diet is one of the most challenging long-term diets, requiring patients to consistently maintain a delicate balance of liquids, proteins and minerals in their bloodstream.

Neveu is aware of how hard and tedious the renal diet can be, but she also knows how vitally important it is for patients on hemodialysis to stay on track. Healthy blood levels can help prevent bone disease, irregular heartbeat, and calcification of the eyes, heart, skin and joints.

Neveu sought a fun solution to motivate her patients. She created an incentive program called Bone Bucks to encourage Veterans on hemodialysis to achieve established target ranges for their blood work. Patients who closely monitor their blood levels, diet and medication, as

prescribed each month, receive Bone Bucks—play money which can be redeemed for prizes such as, DVD players, cookware and electronics. The prizes were donated by the Military Order of the Purple Heart Service Foundation and the Soldiers' Angels.

The program is already yielding promising results. Neveu states, "Since starting the program a little more than a year ago, the Renal Care team has noticed a dramatic improvement in patients' compliance to diets, and laboratory parameters."

Neveu and the Renal Care staff have not only noticed lab score improvements, but have also witnessed changes in Veterans' attitudes and greater interest in learning more about what they can do to improve their health and earn more Bone Bucks. "Patients are excited to receive their monthly report cards and genuinely interested to learn if they are meeting their goals."

For more information about the renal care diet, contact Ms. Neveu, 202-745-8000, ext. 7326.

NEW PROGRAM ENHANCES VA SERVICES FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS



Anita Mingo, DCVAMC's Caregiver Support Coordinator, is available to assist Veterans and their caregivers with the application process.

The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) new Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act 2010 provides additional support to eligible post-9/11 Veterans who elect to receive their care in a home setting from a primary Family Caregiver.



Additional services for primary Family Caregivers of eligible post-9/11 Veterans and Service Members include a stipend, mental health services, and access to health care insurance, if they are not already entitled to care or services under a health care plan. Comprehensive Caregiver training and medical support are other key components of this program.

"This new Caregiver Program builds on what we have known for a long time—Family Caregivers in a home environment enhance the health and wellness of Veterans under VA care," said Michael H. Dunfee, DCVAMC's Acting Director.

Veterans and their Family Caregivers can apply at www.caregiver.va.gov.

Anita Mingo, LICSW, the Medical Center's Caregiver Support Coordinator, is also available to assist Veterans and their Family Caregivers with the application process and direct them to more than two dozen other programs VA offers. "For Veterans who aren't enrolled, I am here to help in the enrollment application process," said Ms. Mingo.

Assistance and information on additional resources are also available to Family Caregivers through VA's National Caregiver Support Line, 1-877-222-VETS (8387). Veterans and Caregivers with questions about the new program can contact Ms. Mingo at 202-745-8000 ext. 5926.

VA MEDICAL CENTER HONORED BY BLINDED AMERICAN VETERANS FOUNDATION

The Blinded American Veterans Foundation (BAVF) presented the Washington DC VA Medical Center (DCVAMC) with the prestigious George Alexander Memorial Volunteer Award for its contribution to quality care for Veterans, and its outstanding leadership in innovating Electronic Health Records.

The award was presented at BAVF's 26th Annual Congressional Awards Ceremony, June 14 by John Fales, President of the Blinded American Veterans Foundation. The George Alexander Memorial Volunteer Award was created in 2000 to recognize leadership and service and is presented to both individuals and corporations. It is named in honor of George Alexander, a dedicated volunteer who worked humbly and tirelessly for Veterans of our nation's capital for over 40 years.

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OVERDUE RECOGNITION FOR WOMEN AF PILOTS

WWII Women Air Force Service Pilot (WASP) 1st Lt. Elaine Harmon didn't join the military for recognition but she certainly earned it. Harmon was one of the 1,074 women pilots who flew non-combat missions in the United States in order to free their male counterparts for overseas combat missions.

She knew the WASPs were trailblazers. "It was a man's world, but we were doing what was needed for the war effort," Harmon said. "My mother was dead set against it."

Harmon, who receives her health care at the Washington DC VA Medical Center (DCVAMC) said the WASPs were not granted Veteran status until 1977 even though they performed vital duties such as ferrying aircraft from the factories to military bases, towing targets for gunnery practice, flying cargo and serving as flight instructors. They were considered civilians. If a WASP was killed while serving, she did not receive a military funeral and her family had to incur the expense of bringing their daughter's remains home.

"The Army Air Corps kept us a secret. They didn't want the enemy to know the country was so desperate for pilots that they were hiring women," said 92 year-old Harmon.

When the WASPs were deactivated, their records were locked away for 30 years. In 1976 when the Air Force Academy began admitting females into the pilot training program, the media began publishing stories about how the new young female cadets would soon be the "first female Air Force pilots". The WASPs knew they had to come together to set the record straight. They petitioned Congress and the injustices were corrected when WASPs were awarded Veterans' benefits in 1977.

The women are now getting the recognition they deserve. In 2009, President Obama signed a bill into law awarding the Congressional Gold Medal to the WASPs.

All the efforts for recognition were worth it, says Harmon. "We just wanted to make sure these women were not forgotten."



One of the first Women Air Force Pilots (WASP), Elaine Harmon, shares her photo of President Obama awarding the Congressional Gold Medal to the WASPs.

SMOKING CESSATION CLINIC

The Smoking Cessation Clinic meets on every Tuesday and Thursday at 9:30 a.m. No referral is needed, just stop by room 1E397 in front of the Orange Clinic to sign in. Nicotine replacement therapy such as patches and gum may be prescribed. Stress management techniques and light hypnosis are also available for participants.

Phone 202-745-8173 for more information.

GAMES IN PARADISE: DC VETERANS COMPETE IN NATIONAL GOLDEN AGE GAMES

By Ciera Heimbigner, Public Affairs Intern

Honolulu is renowned for its luxury hotels and appealing vistas. This year it was popularized as the venue for the National VA Golden Age Games. From May 26-31, 826 Veterans from 55 to 100 years young, participated in what Washington DC VA Medical Center's (DCVAMC) Recreation Therapist Amanda Kelly calls "The Senior Olympics."

Eleven Veterans who receive their health care at DCVAMC participated in the 2011 National Golden Age Games, playing a sport or game they enjoy at a competitive level against others with similar strengths.

"The Games are an outstanding therapy tool and an opportunity for fellowship."

The Games, which are co-sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans Canteen Service (VCS) and Help Hospitalized Veterans (HHV), were hosted by the VA Pacific Island Healthcare System based in Honolulu.

The Veterans participated in fun sports, engaged in their competitive natures, and made new friends. Some Veterans have been participating for years and have made lasting friendships that are celebrated each year at these events. Family members are able to join and support their Veterans as well, creating an even more personal atmosphere for participants. According to Kelly, "The Games are an outstanding therapy tool and an opportunity for fellowship."

The Golden Age Games also offers wheelchair and visually-impaired categories. Kelly was quick to point out that all skill levels are present at the Games creating a competitive and challenging atmosphere. "Just because participants are fifty-five years or older doesn't mean the sports are going to be easy."

The events were held at Fort DeRussy, Mamala Bay and Ke'alahi golf courses, Hawaii Convention Center, Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam and other sites throughout Honolulu.



Veteran John Kukor throws a horseshoe at the National Golden Age Games.



Veteran Ardrena Bailey won a silver medal for bowling at the Golden Age Games.



50 Irving Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20422

COMMUNITY BASED OUTPATIENT CLINICS (CBOC) AND OUTREACH (VET) CENTERS

Community Clinic-Alexandria703-313-0694
6940 South Kings Highway Suite #208, Alexandria, VA 22310

Ft. Belvoir Community Outpatient Clinic
(Opens Sept. 19).....703-313-0694
9300 DeWitt Loop, Ft. Belvoir, VA

Community Clinic-Greenbelt301-345-2463
7525 Greenway Center Drive Suite T-4, Greenbelt, MD 20770

Community Clinic-Southeast202-745-8685
820 Chesapeake Street, S.E., Washington, DC 20032

Southern Maryland VA Outpatient Clinic301-884-7102
29431 Charlotte Hall Road, Charlotte Hall, MD 20622

Alexandria Vet Center703-360-8633
6940 South Kings Highway, Suite #204, Alexandria VA 22310

Silver Spring Vet Center301-589-1073
1015 Spring Street Suite 101, Silver Spring, MD 20910

Washington Vet Center202-726-5212
1250 Taylor St, NW, Washington, DC 20011

DCVAMC FREQUENTLY USED NUMBERS

Washington DCVAMC..... 202-745-8000
Emergency Room..... 202-745-8360
Crisis Hotline..... 1-800-273-Talk (8255)
Medical Advice Line..... 202-745-8247 (Your 24-hour, seven days a week link to expert medical advice)
Appointment Line..... 1-877-DCVAMC1 (328-2621) toll-free
OEF/OIF Help-Line..... 1-877-OIFOEF1 (1-877-643-6331)
Pharmacy Refill..... 202-745-4046
Pharmacy Questions..... 202-745-8235
Patient Advocate Office.... 202-745-8588

PATIENT SERVICE CENTER (PSC) HOURS:

Monday to Friday from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. and on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The PSC helps you manage your appointments. Call 1-877-DCVAMC1 (1-877-328-2621) or local 202-745-8577. It's a one-stop call for scheduling, changing and canceling appointments.



**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

MANAGE YOUR HEALTH CARE FROM HOME

Next time you have an appointment at DCVAMC, be sure and stop by the My HealtheVet kiosk in the atrium lobby to quickly register for the My HealtheVet program.



Once registered, you'll immediately be able to manage your health care on-line in the comfort of your own home.

From the My HealtheVet website you will be able to:

Manage appointments
Refill prescriptions
Check co-pay balances
Review parts of your medical record and much more!

To enroll in My HealtheVet, call the Eligibility Office, 202-745-8000, ext.7982, or visit <http://www.myhealth.va.gov>

she
earned
these.

It's our job to give her
the best care anywhere.



WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE



DCVAMC PROVIDES COMPREHENSIVE WOMEN'S HEALTH CARE. PLEASE PHONE 202-745-8582 FOR MORE INFORMATION.

Visit the DCVAMC website: WWW.WASHINGTONDC.VA.GOV

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View the latest on: health, veteran programs, activities and special events, jobs, volunteer opportunities, visitor information, benefits and much more!

You're the reason we're here, so let's hear from you!

Do you have a suggestion to help us improve our service? Would you like to send a compliment to a DCVAMC employee? Or, do you have a specific subject you'd like to see in Healthier Veterans' News?

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